









**CAN THE CHURCH SURVIVE  
IN THE CHANGING ORDER?**



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# CAN THE CHURCH SURVIVE IN THE CHANGING ORDER?

## I

"I ENVY you young men," Voltaire once remarked to a company of radicals not long before the French Revolution, "you are going to see great things!" His words might well be readdressed to-day to the Christian Church if she were willing to receive them. For again a happy, if perilous, fate has set her, with all the rest of our inherited institutions, in an age indifferent to tradition, fundamental in changes, searching in inquiries. From the beginning of the century the spiritual disintegration of the modern world, the breaking of the ties that bind together the fabric of civilization, has been often noted. In 1912 Rudolph Eucken wrote: "The moral solidarity of mankind is dissolved. The danger is imminent that the end may be a war of all against all. . . . Sects and parties are increasing; common estimates and ideals keep slipping away; we understand one another less and less; even voluntary associations, that form of unity peculiar to modern times, unite more in accomplishment than disposi-

tion, bring men together outwardly rather than in reality."

How startling has been the confirmation of these words! Since they were written the great war has come—and one phase of it has gone. Like a star-shell over No-man's land it has disclosed the divided and embattled hosts, the torn and stricken landscape of our present life. As with any other brutal dislocation of society it has stirred up and brought to the surface the essential ingredients of the time. War, by its very principle of violence, makes no positive contribution either to the individual or to society. But, for both men and civilizations, it does intensify their natural characteristics, precipitate passions and convictions previously held in obscure solution, focus, and confirm in action, tendencies whose dynamic force had long been uneasily accumulating. While the war, therefore, neither initiated nor changed the direction in which the world was moving it did accelerate it, and, in that acceleration, revealed it.

This is why a half furtive uneasiness possesses most men's hearts to-day. This is why, even when local disturbances subside and isolated industrial or political crises pass, we sometimes doubt whether a stable tranquillity either has, or ever will, return again for us and ours. For these things are only symptoms of a profound and wide-spread mental ferment and moral restlessness. It is due not merely to the fact that since 1914 we have whole-

heartedly accepted the way of violence as the ultimate method of settling international disputes nor that, through this acceptance, we have impressed upon the younger generation the ease of corporate revolt, the possibility of extreme and audacious change. It comes rather from that deeper consequence of the war, its revelation to the average man, both in Europe and America, of how much justification there is for protest, how much need for change. A world which, having sent young men to die by the thousands for romantic shibboleths and magnanimous ideals, has already half forgotten them as it coolly and briskly resumes business at the old stand, may be grieved, but it ought not to be astonished, at the revolt of both the minds and the consciences of men.

Not that the immediate future will see the triumph of subversive schemes and radical ideas. If we follow an almost universal precedent we shall pass first through our period of luxury and extravagance. There will be the momentary craving for the accustomed, the accredited, the fixed, at no matter what price. As in the decade following the Napoleonic Wars many men will take Holy Orders, especially in those churches which most impressively represent an antique and external social and religious order. But all this is not significant. It represents merely the inevitable first reaction of society from the emotional strain, the nervous tension, the volitional effort of the war. These

forces of reaction will soon spend themselves and then, at once, new forms and customs will begin to arise which are certain to sweep away much that has seemed precious and permanent in our lives.

Indeed the too-familiar haggings and bargainings, the obscure and intricate diplomatic futilities of the Peace Conference already indicate that the old order is worn out. It has neither the political wisdom nor the moral energy to grapple with the problems it has itself created. We are the living witnesses of the collapse of a finished epoch; the new generation is already at work, in many unrelated, apparently conflicting ways, at the building of another. Even now the stratum of our American society is tilting, slowly putting down the mighty from their seats and exalting the humble and meek. Even as we read a new world is coming up in sombre dawn!

All of which, of course, being general and highly distasteful affirmation, needs some further exposition beyond confident and eloquent assertion. We, of the Church, instinctively dislike such unsettling notions. Indeed most men, for all their forebodings, are natural Bourbons, skeptical at heart that any far-reaching change will really appear in their day and generation, still more skeptical that it could actually shatter the venerable organizations of religion. And, of the men who are able to read the signs of the times, yet fewer have the power to realize them. It takes more than observation and

openmindedness, it takes imagination as well — capacity to translate new ideas into their appropriate terms of action — to perceive that the distinctive features of the world in which we ourselves grew up are dissolving and passing away.

True, old age in every generation sounds the Cassandra note; bewails a world changing with ominous rapidity; cries O Tempora, O Mores! But that is the disquietude of an ebbing vitality, not the prophetic insight of the seer. For when, as sometimes happens, old age is right and great changes do come upon the earth few then perceive them for what they are until they have become established as an accomplished fact. Men are creatures of an infinite pathos; it is only a departing glory whose radiance they note; they see their God after He has passed by; they know not the day of their visitation!

There is also another reason for this lack of constructive imagination. It is a mere banality to remark that new eras never come in the ways that men expect; they invariably shock our notions of what is both sensible and decent; they usually emerge from obscure and discredited sources. The prophet appears in Nazareth or Petrograd; he comes from the wilderness or the slums. New movements never run according to form; we expect a temporal and political Messiah and get a supreme humanist and mystic; we look for national aggrandizement and get championship of the lesser breeds without the law; we rally to overthrow autocracy and subdue

one form of it, while, by that very process, strengthening among ourselves another which is less obvious but no less sinister; we fight to make the world free—meaning by that to impose upon it our notion of freedom as realized in our present representative democracy—and the world retorts by declining to receive it and opposing us with another conception of human welfare which permits a proletarian dictatorship and sets up a Soviet republic! So it has always been! The particular experiments of the moment may well fail; they may deserve to fail. But still the new movement, as it comes, will be bizarre in origin, extreme in expression, offensive in form and in method. Therefore we say, No! These untoward happenings can not be the authentic heralds of a new order. And then the stone which the builders rejected becomes the head of the corner!

For we ought not to forget that just so the priests and pharisees and scribes and the Herods and Pilates of every age have said. They have never known how to read the signs of the times. And if we trust the Churchman, the Conformist, the literalists and prime ministers and politicians, we shall not read them now. For these are officials, they are men in power; by that very fact they become Bourbons, content on the whole with what is; they can “forget nothing and learn nothing.” It were better, though men still call it disloyal and indecent, to turn aside from them and listen to the publicans and sinners,

to eccentric radicals and gaunt prophets crying in the modern wilderness. For it is these, the maimed and spoiled, the reckless and storm-driven and passionate people, the God's fools and absurd idealists, who have seen first the coming of most kingdoms. And they are saying to-day, on soap boxes and behind prison bars and in stuffy workmen's halls and in stark verse and terribly plain-spoken prose that a new world is swimming into our ken. We may at least examine what the movements are from which they reason and test them by comparison with the revolutionary forces of the past. It may be we shall thus find intelligible, if not acceptable, ground for their assumptions.



## II

WE MAY, I think, concede this that they who look for a new era have precedents to support their expectation. For history does move quite as much by spasmodic as by regular processes. There have been great overturns in the past, catastrophic culminations of long periods of apparent quiescence. Jesus' advent offers a chief occasion and a convenient date for one; the Mohammedan invasion which drove Christianity from its birthplace, built the Alhambra, swept up to the very gates of Vienna and Tours, and created for us the Balkan problem and the Near Eastern question was another. To come nearer home the Italian Renaissance which substituted classical learning for scholastic philosophy, and bade the passion and the beauty of this world assert itself once more, and produced Luther's religio-political reformation was quite evidently another. And was there not a new world rather terribly launched one hundred and twenty years ago when the political power which had passed from priest to noble and from noble to king passed once more from king to business man? Yes; sometimes that Destiny which rules in the affairs of men does shake earth and heaven that that which can not be shaken may remain.



Moreover such changes can be to some extent foreseen, for their premonitory symptoms, and their ways of working, appear much the same in every generation. Thus great overturnings seldom come from any single cause; they are a complex of political, economic, intellectual and moral forces. Take for instance the generation that saw the rise and triumph of Christianity. How significant were the political conditions that preceded it! A commercial empire of centralized power and absentee colonial government was enthroned at Rome. Luxurious in spirit, extravagant in expenditure, immensely impressive and grandiose in outward form, all these things were familiar evidences of its corporate old age, the dry rot and inward feebleness of a finished movement. But it still held the known lands in its control. The whole world lay at peace, a typical imperialistic peace, for you remember the ancient comment, "they," the Romans, "make a solitude and call it peace!" But nevertheless it meant that for the first time the world was one. Barriers of race and nation were removed. A unified political control made easy the interpenetration of fresh personalities and ideas. A decadent political order, soon to succumb to the barbarian invasions, offered plastic material to be rebuilt into forms appropriate to new concepts.

Nor was the economic situation without its significance too. How consistently we despise and minimize new movements because they mostly begin

at the bottom among the under dogs! How fatuous that mingled pride and complacency which dismisses any cause as reprehensible or insincere because it is espoused by those who "have everything to gain and nothing to lose by change." Most ideal causes are first established among the economically helpless and oppressed. And it was so here. The Greek and Roman civilizations were built upon yielding human bodies. The ancient world was a slave world, supported by unpaid, ill-fed, exploited human labor. It was these oppressed and embruted human beings who offered a natural medium for the new idea. Primitive Christianity was abhorrent to the standing order of its day. The best men and women were convinced that it was cannibalistic in its rites, indecent in its practices, subversive of established law and order, a political and religious menace. But it was attractive and credible enough to the slaves in Cæsar's household. You see for yourselves how it is, Paul wrote his converts, not many wise in the wisdom of the world nor mighty nor noble are called! No, Christianity began, among the Gentiles, as in good part a proletarian affair; it was the "proles," the humble prolific people, the spawn of the earth, who believed in it. How familiar and how outrageous it sounds!

Again, the world of ideas, no less than the political and economic fabric of the times, was moving toward a change. Intellectual and moral restlessness pervaded the Empire from end to end. The

Roman domination had set forward what the Alexandrian conquests had begun; brought East and West together, mingled the best of Hellenistic and Persian and Judaistic thought. Thus there came about a half-unconscious comparative understanding of religion. Then, as now, such comparative knowledge made for the arousing of that high doubt which is but another name for intelligence, and for the relinquishment of naïve orthodoxies and complacent conformities of conduct. The old gods were failing men in those days. How significant are the troublous, passionate eras when once more man outgrows his gods!

The old pagan a-morality was failing too; a sense of sin was troubling the earth. It was not merely to be traced to Judaism; it showed in the Orphic cults, the Eleusinian mysteries as well; in the mystic meal of Mithraism; in the washing away of the convert's guilt by the fresh blood of a slain bull. How clearly, looking back to-day on the mystic rites, the ethical self consciousness of the later Empire, can we see that it all foreboded profound changes. Once more man's mind raised the eternal queries; with divine discontent his spirit strove for new utterance. His inward peace was gone; he searched for he know not what; and how surely then was his God near him. As old and pious customs waned and new impious ones waxed bold and wanton; as ancient faith in the gods died out and the

ever-futile Intelligentsia, like Seneca, had naught but graceful epigrams and sad-eyed skepticism, and the last blood-letting at the end, how many must have bewailed and berated an evil and degenerate day. But they only saw one-half the picture. All this was a sign that again the fullness of times had come. Once more the days were big with fate. And when, into a world where political and economic and moral institutions were breaking down, and ideas were once more in flux, there came the person and the teaching of Jesus, the whole age expanded and a new character, a new power, a new time was born.

The story is typical of all genuinely revolutionary epochs. It was the same combination of forces in the days of the Mohammedan Invasion which changed forever the history of South Eastern Europe. Rome was gone; the Persian Empire under a succession of incompetent rulers was trembling toward its fall. The Byzantine Empire was enthroned in semi-barbarian splendor at Constantinople; gorgeously garmented priests were intoning the *Te Deum* under the wide dome of *Sancta Sophia*. But already the Greek Church was externalized and sterile, the government nerveless and decadent. Again the times were ripe for another of the periodic transfers of political power.

Moreover, there was the same economically needy class, eager to receive a new gospel which should bring them both material and spiritual betterment.

The multiplying Arabian tribes found the conditions of mere existence intolerable upon their barren, gravelly plateau. But they were poly-demonists and polytheists; divided and suspicious in a divided and suspected world. Then there came to them the unifying power of a great idea. Mohammed preached his stern and undeviating monotheism borrowed from Jewish-Christian sources. By it he welded into one the factious and embittered tribes and made intelligible and trustworthy their world. The fear of the many was removed in ecstatic submission to the One. Thus when again political decadence, economic necessity, and outworn moral and religious forms had prepared the way, Mohammed, by the power of an idea, set Arabia flowing like a tide over Syria and Asia Minor, North Africa, the Balkan Peninsula and Spain.

What then are the signs of a new age? Political feebleness with its inevitable accompaniment of experiment and change. Intolerable economic conditions of existence inciting to corporate revolt and making men amenable to any overturn. Intellectual rebellion against an outworn order of ideas and its methods of expression; moral restlessness and doubt. If, where these are, some new idea is launched, it is like the spark which fires the train which in turn explodes the accumulated charge.

### III

LET us turn back now to our own time. It will not be hard to see why it is that some people feel sure that we too are caught in another rising and obliterating tide. It would not, I suppose, be easy to deny that we have political decadence on the one hand and the most obvious experiment with fresh governmental processes on the other. Europe has endured more than four years of the destruction, the horror, the shame, the futility of a great war. In it we played a brief and important part. Its end has brought disillusionment to hundreds of thousands of men and women in both the old world and the new. Our sons were bade to enter it as "a war to end war," a final struggle which should abolish the intolerable burdens of armaments and conscription. They were taught to exalt it as a strife for oppressed and helpless peoples; the prelude to a new brotherhood and coöperation among the nations, and to that reign of justice which is the antecedent condition of peace.

They did their part. With adventurous faith they glorified their cause and offered their fresh lives to make it good. Their sacrifice, the idealism which lay behind it in their respective communities

—the unofficial perception that they, the fathers and mothers and the boys, were fighting to vindicate the supremacy of the moral over the material factors of life—this has made an imperishable gift to the new world and our children's lives. When an entire community rises to something of magnanimity, and a nation identifies its fate with the lot of weaker states, then even mutilation and death may be giftbringers to mankind.

But the present governments of the world do not represent the community consciousness at that high level. They are so badly organized on discredited principles, for outworn purposes, that they not only misrepresent the better common will, they largely nullify it. The blood of youth had hardly ceased to run before the officials began to dicker for the material fruits of conquest. Not how to obtain peace but how to exploit victory—to wrest each for himself the larger tribute from the fallen foe—became their primary concern. So the youth appear to have died for a tariff, perished for trade routes and harbors, for the furthering of the commercial advantages of this nation as against that, for the seizing of the markets of the world. They supposed they fought "to end business of that sort" but they returned to find their accredited representatives contemplating universal military service in frank expectation of "the next war." They strove for the "self-determination of peoples" but find that it was for some people, but not all, since three

million Germans are now protesting in vain against being torn from Austria and annexed to Czecho-Slovakia, and other hundreds of thousands of them have been handed over, in the good old way, to Jugo Slavia and to Italy. As for the coöperation among nations Judge Gary has just told them that, as a result of the war, they should prepare for "the fiercest commercial struggle in the history of mankind."

The person who does not realize that this situation is brewing an ethical-political crisis of international magnitude is one of those doomed beings whom, because the gods would destroy, they have first made mad. For to-day the average man is beginning to see that behind the determining, as distinguished from the actual fighting forces of the war, there lay a commercial and financial imperialism, directed by small and powerful minorities, largely supported by a sympathetic press, which used the machinery of representative democracies to overthrow a more naked and brutal imperialism whose machinery was that of a military autocracy. Motives, scales of values, desired ends, these were much the same for all those small governing groups of the present world, operating from behind the various shibboleths whose magic they used to nerve the arms of the contending forces. The conclusion of the war has revealed the common springs of action of the professional soldier, statesman, banker, ecclesiastic, in our present civilization. On the whole they



accept the rule of force as ultimate justification of conduct with its accompanying absolutism of faith and thought. Hence it was for the most part the material advancements of separate nations, the intrenching in power of ancient institutional forms of life, not human liberty or future peace for which the bright red blood of youth was spilt.

Our despised pacifists and ridiculed conscientious objectors had already dimly perceived these things. They gauged the war not as a strife between democracy and autocracy but rather as a struggle between rival forms of imperialistic theory and control, each confessing at bottom the same worship of absolutism either in trade or state or industry or the Church, each animated by the same world view. And, on the whole, they saw more clearly than did we.

Here are the reasons why the fruits of victory lie so uneasy in our mouth. This is why victory has brought conquest but small peace. This is why the achievement of physical supremacy is vitiated by the accompanying sense of moral bankruptcy. This is why, although the central powers lost the outward fight yet they were not wholly defeated because the cause they represented was accepted and confessed by their victorious foe. During the war we assumed that a democratic and liberal order of ideas lay beneath our institutions. That is true. But the war has revealed that this liberalism is not adequately represented by these institutions.

Hence the Western world was never nearer political disillusionment than now.

Here then we have the decadence and, accompanying it, the inevitable ferment and desire for experiment and change. Out of Russia has come the practical embodiment of another idea, born of rebellion against the political and industrial imperialism of modern states. It is an idea neither unfamiliar nor new but never before put in operation on a large scale. It represents the revolt of an agricultural state against non-representative control, and of an industrial civilization against a government imposed upon it from without by financial magnates and professional politicians. It denies that there is either the will or the ability in a political system based upon territorial representation to cure the evils which have their origin in the absence from that system of direct occupational representation. It would nationalize land and basic industries; limit over-production and abolish private profits; place the control of the state in the hands of the workers themselves. That such a program could or should be carried out in its entirety is improbable to the point of certainty; that the impulse which produced it will not radically alter governmental processes and the present social status of community groups is equally improbable. Its significance is only partially revealed by and its driving force only partially dependent upon, the worth or justice of its political methods and ideas. Deeper

than they are the springs that feed its passion. It represents a moral protest, a profound human revolt against the exploitation of vast numbers of mankind by an imperialistic society. Already it has intensified to the point of open conflict the class consciousness of artisans and business men nor do our professional politicians really understand, much less show themselves able to cope with, its indictment.

Inextricably mingled with this gradual political overturn, for it is nothing less, is the industrial ferment of the hour. Once more that immense body of mankind whose toil wins for them chiefly the means of continuing existence, with little or no leisure for its enjoyment, is stirred to corporate revolt. It has learned that the nameless sorrows of the poor are not all of them inevitable, except when accepted by the complaisant or permitted by the fortunate. It knows well how to exploit since for long it has been the exploited. It is organizing politically to gain its ends. The significance of the industrial unrest extends far beyond immediate material damage, temporary public inconvenience; it is not greatly affected by isolated victories or defeats in its strife with capital and the legal system which expresses and defends it; it will not be altered by merely remedial legislation or distinguished boards of reconciliation. It means a quite solemn thing; the awakening of a new group in the community to the consciousness of power. That group is not merely striving for better wages, shorter hours, good hous-

ing; organized labor is not merely determined to break the domination of capital allied with political power and to replace it with organized labor controlling governmental authority. If this were all then the strife would be only another form of the old imperialism and would be depressing indeed. But this is not all. There is a new motive and a new idea marshaling these hosts of the industrial arena. It is again found in the denial of absolutism, of all imposed authorities. It conceives of industry as a self governing democracy of organized public service, free in enterprise, independent of alien control, fed from within with all it needs of leadership and power.

If we pass from political experiment and industrial rebellion to the ideal world — the domain of thought and creative expression — we find the same disruptive forces at work. How spectacular for instance is the break with the old order in the arts. We attended, just before the war, the Cubist and Futurist exhibitions. We recall the grotesque sculpture, the strange and repellent forms, the apparently perverse obscurity of the canvases. We were superior or irritated or amused according to the particular brand of our complacency. We heard Debussy's opera, with its new scale, sung; we listened at the Symphony to the aggressive complexity of Strauss, the harsh and inchoate grandeur of Sibelius; to the Russians with their intolerably moving dissonances, the protests of their unresolved

chords. They outmoded even Cesar Franck, and made the great Fifth Symphony sound as though it came with deprecation from very far away. Or take the polyphonic prose of Miss Lowell's "Can Grande's Castle" or any of the *vers libre*. Here is a new literary form born of the endeavor to express a new perception of man's universe. Most of us know that it means something but, for many of us, what it means we do not know!

In all this new creative expression there is of course something of extravagance and pose—the crudeness of the pioneer. But shall we call the new art degenerative, lawless, absurd? So under similar circumstances most men have damned new movements. "This will never do," proclaimed Jeffrey when Wordsworth and Coleridge published the *Lyrical Ballads*. But the reflective will rather say that here new voices are being heard, crying still in the wilderness, and in uncouth garb, but nevertheless not without significance. Matisse and Picasso may not survive. Yet if they decrease it will be because others, like unto them, may increase. No; the meaning of the turmoil and the extravagance in the creative arts is this: Once more the human spirit is rousing itself; it is tired of the old ways and the old things that men have said. Abortive, evanescent any particular school or expression may be yet it indicates that again life is beating down old boundaries, enriching the utterance of the human spirit.

Parallel to it all runs the ethical revolt. Few things are more disturbing to an elder society than the areas of knowledge, the liberality of standards, the freedoms of speech among which the youth of this generation move magnificently unabashed. For they too are children of the new spirit and of that fresh morality which the new psychology, and the revolt against dogmatic creed and convention, is shaping. Science has made clear the interdependence of conduct and physical constitution. From James, who connected it with the spirit, through Freud who associates it with animality, men have learned the power of the subconscious. Like the iceberg, that part of the moral life which can be seen and estimated is bound to, and largely governed by, the greater part which lies buried beneath the dark waters of unconsciousness. Thus heredity, environment, early repressions, painfully wrought out experience, not some flaming supernatural law, have governed our lives. It is out of them that we and our race have builded for ourselves, in loneliness and pain, in peril and sweat and tears, our moral codes.

The new morality does not deny the eternal distinction between right and wrong. That way lies moral anarchy and then despair. It confesses that distinction as grounded in reality. But it knows that it is often beyond knowledge and that the expression of it in conduct is variable and uncertain. Hence the new world repudiates a fixed code of

behavior or any individual's undivided responsibility for breaking it. It is honest and quite decent men who are confessing to-day that no longer may our humanity be stretched or truncated upon the Procrustean bed of an inherited moral order. I suppose the serious plays and novels of any period furnish a trustworthy index to the moral standards of their time. A long line of these, beginning with Nora and Magda and Richard Feverel and coming down to Miss Sinclair's just published "*Mary Olivier*" reveal how desperately the civilized mind of to-day is tearing at the moral and social traditions of the past.

All this is bringing a revolutionary spirit into ethical estimates and procedures. A new morality is already shaping itself born of that fundamental change in the way of thinking about human life which is the very soul of the age in which we live. And again this change is a revolt from external authority. It expressly repudiates incrustated social tradition or any supernatural revelation. It seeks instead to ascertain the natural laws of moral health just as it would ascertain those of physical hygiene. It refuses to find any subject taboo, or any practice antecedently unforgivable, or any error final, or any judgment supreme. It is evolving moral control from within out of self knowledge, and out of that yet profounder consciousness of self which is in the terms of the group. It multiplies incitements to character based not on ascetic instinct, or on other-

worldly hopes and fears, but on enlightened self interest, collective loyalty, reverence for the struggling spirit of mankind.

Here is a sharp break with the past. Nowhere does moral conformity as such tend to be more unimaginative and rigid than in small church communities. Old fashioned morality was in danger, by its very nature, as something imposed upon mankind, of degenerating into a mere code of external practices. It could take no official account of temperamental or racial differences, of potent strains of deep and far inheritance. The absolute moral code of a "revealed" religion has always repelled humane and sophisticated spirits. Between it, to-day, and the mingled revolt and aspiration of this new world, a great gulf is being fixed.



## IV

HERE then, surely are all the elements of a new age fermenting in the modern state. Their claim to permanent significance is authenticated by a common purpose which actuates them, a common conviction which, in varying degrees of clearness and consistency, underlies them all. It clothes with its own unity and dignity the turbulent strifes of the moment, giving each one of these apparently unrelated movements a significance and force which, without it, they would not possess. For they all represent, in their respective fields, a protest against external forms of domination, a distrust of the reality or justice of any sort of coercion that comes from beyond or without. They are all parts of a new creed, a declaration of faith in the soundness and adequacy of the human mind and spirit, in the reality and strength of mankind's self control. We may, then, endeavor to group the vast array of facts which we have been briefly sketching under one formula and say that they all represent a far flung rebellion against the old concept of authority. What is happening is that Western civilization is breaking away from a central notion, around which it was builded, by which it was given coherency and power and, by a characteristic swing of the pendulum, is

reshaping itself upon an idea almost its exact antithesis.

We are witnessing in fact the final emancipation, or if you please, defection, of society from the enchantment of the Middle Age. That age was nothing if not metaphysical. Unlike the modern world medieval society was more concerned with the meaning, than with the means, of existence. It did not so much desire to exploit as to understand its environment. It became both cause and effect therefore that, in a civilization thus dominated by ultimate interests and speculative thinking, Church and State should be almost indistinguishable and ecclesiastical power ramify every section of society. Now the intellectual basis of this politico-ecclesiastical state, its regulative idea, was the assumption that this is a divided, a "dualistic" universe. The cosmos is separated into two mutually exclusive spheres, the natural versus the supernatural, the temporal versus the eternal, the human versus the divine.

Two sources of authority found their respective origin, and appropriate spheres of action, in these two worlds. The natural, human, temporal world looked to experience for its guide, the recorded and interpreted experiment and insight of the race, ever emending and enlarging as brought before the reason and the conscience of successive generations. But the supernatural world, to which by this way of thinking sometimes the State and always the Church

belonged, had another source of knowledge and power, an authority external to mankind, not produced by experience, not subject to its laws, not necessarily consistent with its conclusions, unlike it in short, both in nature and in operation.

The medieval world then was a double affair. Let down so to speak, upon the table-land of man's natural understanding, there came to supplement his inadequate human experience, to save him from this world and his own self, this other and transcendent world, "revealing" to him absolute truths and values which neither conscience nor reason nor experience would have found alone. This "revelation," certified by miracle, by prophecy, by the material appearance of godlike Beings, imposed upon mankind a world of dogmas and values, not wrought out of the precious stuff of human living but vouchsafed by Deity; a world, then, whose dicta and institutions were to be accepted not because of their inherent reasonableness or intrinsic worth but because of their supernatural origin. So, while the authority of experience in the secular world was partial, relative, progressive, the authority of "revelation" in this world was absolute, fixed, complete.

Here then is an idea majestic indeed; one of man's most serious speculations as to the nature of his universe. It fed the visions and springs of action of an age which made surpassing achievements in art, in literature, in philosophy and, to a less degree, in governmental science. It offers an hypothesis re-

garding the sum of things by which the eternal problems of the origin and meaning of sin and suffering, the nature of free will, may most easily be approached. It makes both harder and simpler the approach to theistic speculation, harder because the one and sovereign God of a divided universe is not an easy conception, simpler because it readily makes room for a God who is more than, and distinct from, the sum of all his created and ongoing life.

But, for better or worse, it is an idea that the present world has essentially rejected. It too readily lends itself to the uses of religious dogmatism and political tyranny; it appears inconsistent with that knowledge of the natural world and its processes, and that insight into the origin and development of the human race, which the modern man possesses. And yet it would astonish the unreflective to realize that practical embodiments of this notion still dominate large sections of contemporary life, surviving in remote and debased forms in the midst of an industrial and material civilization. It gives its derived metaphysical justification to the most unlikely theories and practices. It is a common fallacy to suppose that the speculations of philosophers have only the slightest practical significance. Nothing could be further from the truth. The abstract theories of one generation become the axioms and guides to the practical conduct in the next. Nothing indeed is harder to dislodge than a great idea

when once it has worked itself into human institutions and practices. Long after it has become intellectually indefensible it remains practically impregnable. Thus it is precisely those belated sections of modern life that are still under the spell of this notion of a dual world, with which the new age is desperately contending.

For instance, it is sufficiently obvious that the better part of the institutions of religion still frankly or tacitly base their claims to reality and worth upon a supernatural revelation. The seriousness of this attitude of the Church in the present day we shall presently be discussing. The doctrine of the divine right of emperors and kings is a political expression derived, towards the end of the Middle Age, from this same world conception. All rigid moral codes which forbid the reopening of any ethical questions, which will tolerate no deviation from the present law and status, for instance, of the family, which insist upon applying, as in the question of Sabbath keeping, the mechanical standards and requirements of a vanished order of society to a new and different one—these all have no possible justification except on the theory of a revealed, hence a changeless and absolute moral law, above mere experiential guidance.

The fight still wages hotly for holding to this regulative idea in many other parts of our social structure. Wherever the elder world declares that certain institutions and practices are beyond ques-

tion; that they must be "accepted" as prerequisites of a stable civilization, it declares that one portion of man's life and experience belongs to a different category from the other. Many men are medievalists when it comes to reopening the question of the right of private property; it affronts them even to discuss it; they insist upon regarding it as a closed question.

There is a prayerbook which bids us all thank God for that state in life into which it has pleased Him to call us. Apparently the caste system of a feudal society is divinely ordained, super-reasonable, and, in a normal world, equally pleasing and beneficial to the scullery maid and to the lord of the manor. The late Mr. Baer, who was reported to have said in court that it was impious to interfere with the Deity who had designed that some men should be coal barons and some men coal miners, was a sublimely simple example of a large class of men who, in the industrial world, instinctively rather than consciously, intrench themselves behind this dualistic notion. Theirs is a divided world of man and superman; "hands" and captains of industry; great and aggressive nations favored of Deity, "backward" nations graciously intended for commercial and financial "development"; democratic principle recognized in politics as salutary and workable but autocracy — capital and control held in the hand of a small and outside group — essential to successful industrial enterprise. Here is part of the

world under one law, the rule of freedom, of faith in man and in the trustworthiness of his experience; another part of it under another law, the arbitrary authority of tradition, custom, prejudice, mistaken notions of self interest, genuine belief in the governing group as essentially different from the governed.

How far reaching then still is the paralyzing grip of this idea of an ancient civilization upon the plastic processes of the new. The Churchman in religion, the Conformist in conduct, the Tory or "stand-patter" in politics, the Aristocrat in society, the Autocrat in industry, the Imperialist in world diplomacy and finance—he who has one code of ethics for his personal and private life and another for diplomatic intercourse, trade expansion, international banking—all these religious, political, social and industrial forces of obscurantism—represent the last attenuated and obscure workings of a world view which, in its fresh and powerful beginnings, created the empire of Charlemagne and the splendors of the medieval Papacy.

## V

WE turn now to examine the other regulative idea which is a chief source of the impulses and convictions of the present age in which the lives and character of the coming generation are being formed. It is not to be supposed that it is new, a novelty that has just dawned upon the modern consciousness. It has long been working in areas as apparently unrelated as the romantic movement in literature on the one hand and the investigations of natural science on the other. Indeed, it is more than half a century since the world of thought, where, as we insist, both feeling and action find their permanent sustenance, began to challenge the natural-supernatural theory on which the absolute state, the revealed religion and their accompanying doctrines as to the nature of man and the structure of society were built.

Darwin and Wallace began the new movement with the announcement of the evolutionary hypothesis. Here is a theory, open to objections, not conclusively demonstrated, yet the most probable one which we as yet possess, as to the method of the appearance and continuance of life upon the planet. It conceives of creation as an unimaginably long and intricate development from the inorganic to



the organic, from the simple to the complex forms of life. With this theory, long now a regulative idea in the scientific world, began the shattering of the notion that our world is two, not one, and that humanity and divinity are separate and different things. For here was creative energy, the very essence of "transcendent life," not transcendent, but working outward from within, a part of the process, not above and beyond it. Here was life not descending upon men by fiat from on high but an indwelling force working through them here. Most of all, here was our humanity, not seen as something static and absolute, bestowed in one instantaneous act of sovereign will, but plastic and indefinite; a process rather than a state; not absolute, then, but partial and progressive; incomplete, not fallen; life an orderly process, without known breaks or infringements, hence relatively intelligible.

Thus the rise of the natural sciences made certain the questioning of a remote and absentee God, of a different order from his creatures. It made unlikely the supposition that He occasionally broke into our world, so to speak, to manifest himself in prodigious and inexplicable forms. Here then in the beginnings of biology and zoölogy, and their kindred sciences, began the breaking down of the old dualism and with it the gradual relinquishment of every concept of divine and human nature which had flowed from it.

The rise of the natural sciences was soon followed

by that of the humane sciences; then by the new methods of historical and literary criticism and comparative investigation. Starting with the new world view, which the natural sciences had introduced, men turned from speculative philosophy to the study of their own kind, to historical research and experimental investigation of natural phenomena. Thereby they strengthened the new faith that the real material of knowledge and the true source of guidance of the human spirit is found not in any super-mundane revelation, but in the everyday stuff of our individual and collective experience.

Here then was an added confirmation of the new conviction, that all life, so far as we can see, is part of a uniform order. It does not appear to need two worlds, two natures, two sorts of power, to explain it. Not that anyone claims, under the new hypothesis, that its explanation is certain or complete. These absolute assertions were made by the old world-view although neither in reason nor experience could it support them. The new order is more modest, more ingenuous, than that. It asserts no absolute assurance. But, with a high seriousness, it rejects any convictions or institutions whose sole, or chief, claim to acceptance lies in their supernatural origin, their revealed content, their miraculous attestation. The new order accepts many of the insights and convictions of the old but for other and different reasons than those by which they were formerly defended. The elder world imposed

them upon man; it made sublime assertions. The new world, in so far as it is true to its own genius, has no interest in either dogmatic assertion or denial. It accepts what it accepts reasonably, relying on its own free conscience, informed understanding and will.

Now of course with the relinquishment of the divided world there went also the two kinds of authority by which it operated. If the world is one then the source and the criteria of the truth are not plural but one. Then the collective experience of mankind, which the older order accepted as a guide for a portion of our destiny, is the authority for it all. Thus the preserved and interpreted experiment and insight of mankind, which ancient literatures record, and great institutions preserve, play their impressive part, still remain an authority and a guide, but no longer an absolute one. And they are forever being modified, their values re-appraised, as they are both enlarged and corrected by the accumulating experience of the race. Nothing in life, under this world-view, is held sacro-sanct as beyond question; nothing except death as beyond change. It is not fair to say that what we are thus witnessing in this generation is the break-down of all authority. Just the contrary is true. It is not the idea of anarchy which underlies the modern process; the genuine anarchist is as rare in the world of thought and action as the genuine atheist in religion. What we are witnessing is the assertion

of a new idea of authority, removing its locus from without man and centering it within him. Coupled with this is the determination to test, as by acid, every practice and institution which an elder world founded upon the old conceptions.

Again, it is easy for the imperialist in action, the Catholic in thinking, to damn the new world with a phrase, to call its process a "mere rationalism." This again is unjust. Rationalism means dependence upon one of man's faculties alone, the reasoning one. It is as partial and dangerous as dependence upon feeling alone. The literalist and the sentimentalist, for all their mutual contempt, are own cousins, victims of varying forms of the same fallacy. Experience as a whole is the guide of the new world; it includes man's feeling and imagination no less than his logical faculties. The modern world is quite intensely aware that "the great thoughts come from the heart" and that "the heart has its reasons of which the mind knows nothing."

Finally, to call this new view of the universe heretical is permissible, to call it necessarily irreligious is certainly untrue. For belief in such an authority rests on faith in the reality of our relative human knowledge, willingness to trust the process of the reason and the instinct of the heart. It rests back then on faith in man as an intelligent and trustworthy being, one whose ignorance and helplessness are neither perverse nor hopeless,

whose nature is essentially in accord with what actually and eternally is. This in turn postulates, at least leaves room for postulating, a conception of the universe that produced man as an intelligible and intelligent order, wrought out of conscious Will and Purpose. Such an evaluation of the world as a whole is far removed from the mechanistic or materialistic definitions of it. Moreover, this evaluation of man and his Maker, in the terms of man's experience, would not seem to be inconsistent with the teaching and the method of Jesus.

Here then is the conviction, often abused, often unrecognized or only dimly perceived, which lies back of our tumultuous and insurgent life and gives something of dignity and coherence to its widespread restlessness and its open rebellions. The average man has a scent for truth rather than a comprehension of it. He does not know precisely what is happening about him. Rather he feels the new trust in natural processes and the new exaltation of human nature. He is aware that man has moved into the center of his own world, so to speak; that he has an inalienable right, by virtue of the principle of human life, to certain dignities and decencies of existence; to the assertion of his own freedom, to the reliance upon his inner impulses and spontaneous convictions. He is aware that the limits of that freedom, control of those decencies, the areas of personal dignity, are not fixed by the outward law of any inherited social

caste, any existent industrial order, any present code of procedure, any priestly authority or divine commandment. Just because he does not understand it very clearly, he is the more intoxicated with the perception that the old barriers, the old standards, the old obediences are broken down.

And so they are. What is now happening in the world is the gradual transformation of law, government, conduct, religion under the impact of this new world view. Already it has abolished three great autocracies, laid the doctrine of the divine right of emperors in the dust. Men will doubtless continue to seek, in the nature of the universe, some justification of political authority; but they are not likely to find it again in two kinds of power and in two kinds of beings. They will set up again their kings but they will be constitutional monarchs not arbitrary sovereigns.

It is the new idea which has struck a smashing blow in the world of creative arts at methods and standards which had been kept inviolate chiefly because associated with great names and ancient achievements. Nowhere is this explosive force more widely felt than in the ethical and industrial world. For here, in the readjustment of practical human relationships, is the most pressing need of the times. Men have got to learn all over again how to live together under the novel and complex conditions of the present industrial state. The basis of all the experimenting now going on in personal,

industrial, political relationships is the conviction that nothing in our world is to be excepted from the possibility of change, the assertion of a plastic and progressive moral code; the appeal to the common need and the common conviction of the group as the ultimate authority and guide. Nowhere is the divided world, with its areas of absolutism, its revealed standards unalterably built into the nature of things, its notion of fixed social castes and unchanging religious dogmas, its rigid moral codes and static human order more bitterly, more determinedly fought than here.

There is a genuine element of faith, an ideal quality which is very moving, in the reliance of the present generation upon the essential soundness of the human impulse, its trust in the ultimate good sense of the collective mind, its confession of dependence upon man's power of self control. The *Nation* has recently pointed out a striking instance of this in its comparison of the two chief plans for the reorganization of the railroads, Senator Cummins' and Mr. Plumb's, which are now before the Federal Congress. The senator stands for the older order. He places his "reliance on the Government, proposes in the ultimate to prohibit strikes and to repress them by the power of the state." The new order puts its faith in the human spirit. Mr. Plumb, in his reliance on the people, proposes to trust to the voluntary action of the railroad men. "The authoritarian element in his

scheme is conspicuous chiefly by its absence. The contrast is significant and thought-provoking. The whole tendency of organized government is toward compulsion and regimentation; the remedy for the evils of the state is more state. To this the Brotherhoods oppose the principle of voluntarism—not denying the necessity of organization, but proposing to base it on a cohesive organizing principle developing from within rather than on a mechanical scheme imposed from without. Instead of government regulation, they dream of self-control.”

We begin then to see the contours of the real battlefield, the figures and weapons of the actual contestants of the hour. Strifes that count are not waged with “75s” and Big Berthas; they are staged in the invisible and real world of the human spirit, fought with the deadly and intangible weapons of the mind. There is something of sublime fatuity in the ring and clangor of this world’s arms; a huge naïveté in the pomp and circumstance of war. The late conflict artificially divided the real contestants of the hour and thereby obscured for the moment, the actual warfare. The physical combat separated men by the external accidents of geographical location and political allegiance; the real battle divides them according to their spiritual loyalty to the old or the new world. Many who were friends in that other contest are foes in this war of ideas which knows no geographical or racial



boundaries. Beyond all reasonable doubt this, the significant spiritual struggle, is approaching its culmination. The old world view still holds a general, in many places an outwardly impressive, control. But to-day the great divide is being passed. The guidance of our children's destinies is slipping from an out-worn notion, still powerful, but ever diminishing, to the fresher concept, not fully recognized as yet, but steadily waxing stronger, more comprehensive, in control.

## VI

IT is surely not unimportant then to ask on which side of the battle the Church is to be found. That she should be able to stand aloof from it, uninfluenced and indifferent, is inconceivable and it ought to be inconceivable that she should ever desire to do so. Yet many would regard our question as impertinent and superfluous. It is the fallacy of all separatists to suppose that man's religious interests and beliefs can be set off from the broad current of the world's affairs, and, therein, is an example of that unconscious allegiance to the idea of an arbitrarily divided world where two sorts of life and two sets of interests are thought to exist unmingled side by side. How common it is to find men assuming that religion is something different in origin and nature from all the rest of life, untouched therefore by "the changes of time and the delusions of men." It is this notion which lies obscurely behind the crude demand of the prosperous parishioner of the middle aisle that his minister should leave business and politics alone and "preach the simple gospel."

But we who belong to the new world and crave, no less for it than for ourselves, the hope and con-

solation of religion, must ask the question with sincerest urgency. For it is of the essence of the present viewpoint to insist that religion is just human life itself, functioning in certain ways; that it does not differ in derivation or kind, from the rest of our experience. It represents what is man's noblest, most comprehensive effort, the struggle to evaluate his life as a whole and harmonize its all with his evaluation of the whole universe about him.

Clearly then his religious interest cannot be dissociated from the rest of his experience. It is but one, if the highest, expression in the complex where all the other elements are perpetually acting and reacting upon one another and upon it. If the political, ethical, economic and æsthetic interests of man are changing, it is safe to assume that his religious world is being transformed too.

And indeed there is a vague but widespread consciousness of this fact among church people. There is an uneasy conviction, especially within the Protestant community, that there is something seriously wrong with institutional religion, an ever widening gulf between it and the rest of the activities of mankind. It is as though the Church knew that she could not ignore the new world and yet felt that she could not accept it; would try therefore all possible evasions or compromises of the issue. Thus the tendency of most churchmen, almost invariably amiable and conservative men, is to minimize the depth and significance of the

chasm. They point out how, from the days of Amos and Hosea on, ecclesiastical institutions have been passionately indicted by the prophets and as indignantly defended by the priests and that, of course, both are in the right and that the Church has been both succeeding and failing in every generation. Then they fall back on the comfortable assertion that the present separation, therefore, is nothing new, that any human institution fits but clumsily, after its initial moment, into the experience it is intended to interpret and transmit.

All of which is a very inadequate explanation of the immediate situation. To be sure the present state of organized religion is but one example of that oblique line of human progress in which form and practice perpetually lag behind the progressing thought and feeling of the race. But in times of crisis, when the world moves with decisive rapidity, this discrepancy between experience and expression may easily be intensified to the point of culpability and peril. It is important then, at this moment, to inquire not if the Church is not properly, and by nature, a conservative institution, which is doubtless true, but whether at present her conservatism may not be passing over into decadence.

The question is the more pressing because the new world, that stands aloof from the Church today, is by no means irreligious. On the contrary, one of its most striking characteristics is its idealism. The will of the emerging order is largely

set on invisible and intangible things. It is humane idealists, men of lofty and devoted imagination who are fighting for the extension of democracy in business and industry; it is a vivid spiritual passion in the hearts of a devoted minority, which, even at this unpropitious moment, is insisting on the treatment of international questions as moral issues and the shifting of them from the twilight zone of international intrigue to the plane of open and revealing discussions. It was a chivalric and imaginative loyalty to oppressed and helpless peoples, a protest against cruelty and tyranny, a vicarious suffering with human pain, and others' tears, that was a major motive with American ambulance boy and American soldier. Now behind these characteristic expressions of the moment lies reverence for the principle of human life, the love of man as man, recognition of certain inalienable rights of human beings, identification of the fate of the individual with the fortunes of the group. This is of the essence of what used to be called "evangelical Christianity."

Why is it then, that, in this fresh, young world of eager and provocative idealists, the institutions of religion should remain relatively conventional and innocuous? There are many notable exceptions to this, as to all rules, but in general the Church appears as an organization running parallel to modern life rather than a part of it. It is far from being a chief source from which the new springs

flow; but rather a quiet and diminishing pool into which, from time to time, are deflected rills of their abundant and onrushing tides. No; something more serious than the irreducible margin of difference, that exists between every institution and the life of its constituency, is responsible here.

Another and an ignoble way to quiet our own fears and meet the mingled distrust and indifference of the new world is to affect to despise and belittle it. But indubitably many good and able folk whose achievements in sound workmanship, personal character, public service, the creation of beauty, cannot be denied, have left the Church and are getting on, with inward peace and outward dignity, apart from her. It will not do, therefore, to group all these indifferentists together as apostates; to damn them with the poor phrase of "worldliness"; to suspect their motives, insist on their ignorance of essential facts, magnify their temperamental limitations, talk of the blindness of unfaith. They are too many and too significant for that!

Moreover, the suspicion and rebuke are no longer confined to the alien and the unsympathetic. Mr. Cleland McAfee, of the Presbyterian Communion, has been writing in the *New Republic* under the saucy title: "Can Christianity Longer Tolerate the Church?" He makes short shrift of her multiple over-lapping parishes, her out-moded forms of worship, her inefficient organization. Mr. Fosdick, the Baptist, speaking through the *Atlantic*

*Monthly*, indicts the Church as negative in morality, unsocial in conduct; he fears that the innumerable exclusions of her pettified orthodoxies have offended the grave-eyed soldier returned from his wars.

Obviously these strictures, and many others like them, do not touch the root of the matter. One need not take detailed discussion of sectarian eccentricity, provincial forms, domesticated activities, too seriously. They deal with the outside of the cup and the platter. Nevertheless, it is of significance that, as the new world swings more and more into power, distrust and criticism from within as well as without the ranks of the church, show that many men doubt what her relationship to it is to be.

But it is Mr. Kirsopp Lake, distinguished clergyman and scholar, who writing in an issue of the *New Republic*, of June, 1917, sounds the significant note. Speaking on the "Future of Religion" he talks not of antique forms or methods but of what produced them, the continued allegiance to outgrown ideas. He speaks of one of these in particular, the current conception of the "personality" of God, and doubts if there is sufficient "trust in the adventure of the intelligence to lead the churches to its repudiation." Now it is this indictment of the ecclesiastical orthodoxies, the intellectual obscurantism of the churches, which pierces to the heart of things. Here we are dealing with causes not effects, not with symptoms but with the organic disease itself. The source of

parochial divisions and irrelevant activities and religious provincialism, is petty thinking. The comparative lack of moral passion and vital energy runs back into the lack of clear and comprehensive thought. The reason for so much conventionalized and sterilized preaching is that the Church is still living in the old order of ideas. That order is neither interesting nor convincing to the present generation and when she appears with it, as her vehicle for her message, she has nothing inevitable, self-verifying, to say.

Where then on the whole does the Church stand in the present crisis? She stands outside of, and, if not opposed to, unwilling to courageously accept, the new order. That is the secret of her waning influence in the characteristic life of the present time. She will never reconcile it to herself by tinkering with her circumference, reforming the more flagrantly outworn of her forms and practices, "reinterpreting" her scholastic concepts. That will have the essential futility which belongs to all superficial and merely remedial endeavor. Let her rather get back to what produced outworn standards and discredited and unintelligible expressions of life! Begin at the center, undertake the preventive tasks of reshaping her ideas.

But this means genuine reform, radical strife; here actually the old and new worlds within the institution would come to grips. Schism and heresy would tear her asunder; suffering and a new



birth would result. Life would be there, and, as always where life is, pain and travail would be there as well. Already, therefore, she is at work, trying to avoid this clear-cut issue and to minimize its existence by a renewed activity in social and industrial reforms, the re-making of her outward practices so as to adjust them to the needs and tendencies of the moment. Many will ask how the Church can be called obscurantist or timid to-day when the Administrative Committee of the National Catholic War Council, for instance, urges the permanent retention of the National War Labor Board; advocates equal pay for equal work for women and men; insurance against old age, sickness, unemployment; heavy taxes on incomes and excess profits; defends the right of labor to organize, to take part in the management of industry and eventually in ownership. Who can say that the Church is out of sympathy with the times when the Methodist Communion has also put itself on record as regards industrial reform? And then there is a recently formed organization among the Episcopalians, The Church League for Social and Industrial Democracy. Its first article affirms that "only that social order can be termed Christian which substitutes fraternal coöperation for master-ship in industry and life." And these are but examples, of which others might be adduced, of the readjustment of policy and action to the new external situation. Do not these all refute the

charge of a lack of essential sympathy with the new order?

I think not. For these are outward and practical reforms where we need first inward and essential ones. There is no restatement of our philosophy of life in the terms of the new order in all this. Which is the more characteristic task of the Church of the living God — to expend herself in the mending of temporal conditions or to lead in the mending of the idea of a world that produced these conditions? As long as the Church's intellectual life still largely remains in the world of the old order there is a taint of immediacy, of opportunism, over all such activities. The temptation here as always is to seek refuge from the difficulties of thought in the opportunities of action. Reforms should begin where the abuses do, in the concept of things, not the expression of them. Standards of conduct follow standards of thought. Men will never trust and wholeheartedly accept our practical coöperation in attacking the abuses of the imperialistic order as long as they suspect our fundamental allegiance to the view of the world that underlies that order. All blanket indictments appear ungracious and ungenerous and they cannot be wholly fair. Nevertheless it is in general true that the Church is at odds with the changing order. What ails her is that she is maintaining a world-view, with its accompanying scale of values, which belongs to the outmoded order of ideas.

## VII

As a matter of fact the Church is the chief remaining expression of the old order of ideas. There is a wide divergence of viewpoint among her laity and, in some communions, an undefined toleration of informal heterodoxy. But the official statements, the phraseology of the creeds, the language of the liturgies and hymns, the conditions of entrance into membership, the prescribed codes of conduct, are mostly expressions of the passing order.

To many, of course, this assertion will appear not as an indictment but as a commendation. They identify discipleship with orthodoxy; fidelity to the Christian life with unreserved acceptance of its doctrinal formulations. The large majority of believers, for instance, are communicants of the Greek and Roman Churches or of the "Catholic" party in the Anglican Communion. These churches have the deserved advantage, and command that measure of respect, which belongs to all those who take frank and clear-cut attitudes toward the moot questions of their day. They challenge the new world and its intellectual order and, with an interesting mixture of candor and astuteness, continually oppose it. Theirs is a dual world with

a supernatural grace, transmitted to the natural man who is incapable of salvation without it. Their authority is that of a supernatural institution, differing in kind from those of this world. Their institution is the treasury of the truth, which, transmitted by Apostolic succession, is distributed to the faithful through the exclusive media of Church and Priest and Sacraments. Thus they proclaim their allegiance to forms and notions of the religious life which were produced by the mind, and intended to meet the needs, of a vanished order of society.

So profound is that temperamental cleavage in human nature which makes many men avoid at any cost the joys and responsibilities of self government and self decision, and which corresponds to this same cleavage in human thinking, that it is difficult to believe that "Catholic" religion will ever vanish from our life. And it would be as ungenerous as unfair to minimize its immeasurable services to civilization in an earlier generation or the devotion and genius of many individuals in its present communion. There is a sense in which it is true that a Church which produced the first rate mind of Thomas Aquinas, a saint and Christian like Francis of Assisi, and a shepherd and statesman like Cardinal Mercier, can scarcely be put upon the defensive. Yet it cannot be denied that the whole structure of Catholic theology and ascetic moral practice is in conflict with the scientific spirit

and the deepest convictions of our age. Therefore, while a great many people, good and honorable and respected people, still believe in the Church's especial and exclusive vehicles of grace, they are not, for the most part, the significant people, not the ones who are counting in the new life of this generation. It is not perhaps without significance to remember that when the Cathedral of Rheims was bombarded and all its dim and intricate richness of Gothic glory was in flames, a wave of protest ran hot through Christendom. But the thrill of horror was not for the desecration of a venerable Christian temple; it was for the destruction of a work of art. Did men cry out because barbarians stormed the Tabernacle of the Eternal Presence? No; they had largely forgotten that any one really believed the Eternal Presence was there!

But the present position of Protestantism is neither ethically nor intellectually so defensible as that of the Catholic Churches. For the Protestant Church professes to have abjured external authority. She quotes Calvin's famous phrase about relying upon the testimony of the Holy Spirit in the conscience and the heart. She speaks much of the free and unmediated access of the believer to God. She asserts her essential kinship with the humanistic forces, which beginning at the Renaissance have been slowly building the new freedom and exalting the individual spirit.

But her claim cannot easily be substantiated. As

an institution, she, too, still holds to the view of the two worlds, natural and revealed, sacred and secular, relative and absolute. On the whole she still regards her message as having been "once for all delivered to the saints"; she considers her codes and practices as "not of this world" but of a different and transcendent one; and her religious experience as an inner life "hid with God" in some way or place from which the rest of experience and the remainder of humanity is, by nature, excluded. Holding thus to the old view of the world, and the old notion of authority, she finds herself in tacit conflict with the controlling ideas, hence with the characteristic movements and the sources of power, of the present generation. The ungodly, who like to scoff, might well say that Protestantism is falling between two stools, that she belongs to neither one world nor the other. The pious, who are gifted with that insight which is the reward of the good life, might retort that there is a certain opportunity and freedom in even so anomalous a situation!

But not, I think, in days like these when great human issues are trembling in the balance and the world is being broken to be made anew. Great crises force men and institutions to take sides; neutrality on the intellectual and ethical issues of this moment is as impossible for the Church to-day as it was for Pilate when he looked into the face of Jesus; our very inaction will tell the new world

well enough where we stand. Here beyond doubt is a major cause of the relatively swifter disintegration of the Protestant as compared with the Catholic churches. They confront the distrust and dislike of a large proportion of the laboring men and women on the one side and are obliged to endure the indifference and neglect of many serious minded and cultivated men and women on the other. And a chief reason for this is that the Protestant claim to intellectual and ethical freedom goes hand in hand with parochial thinking and prudential morality.

Take for instance the familiar Protestant attitude toward the Bible. The freedom with which Luther proclaimed the Reformation, as evidenced in his tracts on the "Liberty of the Christian Man" and the "Address to the German Nobility," was soon recalled. Afraid of the consequences of its own logic, the Reformation contented itself with the denial, not of the doctrine of external authority and supernatural revelation, but merely of that expression of it found in the Catholic Church and the Papal supremacy. Thus it merely changed the locus of the imposed control, and the channel through which it flowed, by transferring the authority from the Church to the Bible, setting up in the place of a supernatural institution an infallible Book. Hence the religious message still remained fixed and arbitrary; one realm of human thought and action, and that the most impor-

tant, withheld from criticism and investigation.

The heresy trials in the East during the last forty years, in more than one Protestant Communion — those unhappy spectacles which “make the mind to chuckle while the heart doth ache” — indicate that the liberal portion of Protestantism has broken away from so untenable a position. But the majority of Protestant believers still accept the Bible as the one “perfect and infallible rule of faith and practice.” They are, at this moment, establishing Bible schools or colleges in the larger cities for the express purpose of combating liberal thinking and they are sending an increasing number of young men into the ministry who profess to base their leadership upon a literal and absolute allegiance to an uncritical and unhistorical interpretation of the contents of the Old and New Testaments.

It is serious enough that all this is a menace to the Church; it is far more serious that it is also a menace to religion. The writer teaches each year, to a class of college students, the literature of the Old Testament. He finds them pretty generally divided into two groups; those who regard the Scriptures as mechanically and completely inspired, a sort of magical writings; those who think their claim to any kind of serious consideration is an exploded fallacy and patronize them with flippancy or contempt. Such perilous obscurantism on the one hand and repellent vulgarity on the other is the natural result of the present intellectual attitude



of many churches. As their constituency becomes increasingly informed and intelligent, the danger of proclaiming as their authority a conception of the Bible which assumes either ignorance, or denial, of the results of historical and literary criticism, will be correspondingly apparent and acute.

For the twentieth-century man knows that the present religious experience of mankind has many other sources of inspiration than the Jewish and Christian Scriptures. As Professor Ames of Chicago has recently said, "No earnestness in the reaffirmation of conventional views, no restatement of traditional faith, will ever satisfy those who are awake to the problems and outlook of these days." So long as the majority of Protestants hold to a view of the Bible which is neither historically nor spiritually credible, which cannot be successfully defended, which obscures and not illuminates its pages, so long the better minds, the more sensitive spirits of this generation will distrust and avoid it — not because they are neither honorable nor devout, but rather, because they are.

It will be indignantly asserted that such strictures as these do not apply to many metropolitan parishes and prosperous suburban churches. But these institutions draw their life blood from the small towns and country parishes, just as the cities derive their human material from the same rural and semi-rural sources. What the Protestant Churches are, then, under the exceptional leader-

ship procurable in the great cities, is not so significant as what they are in the average American community. It is in these communities that the material is being trained which will make or unmake the Church of the future. And in them she is steadily losing ground both in the caliber of her ministry and in the attendance upon her services. She does not speak the language of this day and she is gradually ceasing to be heard or understood.

## VIII

BUT the deeper spiritual needs of men and hence the great questions and the central sources of power for religious organizations do not center around any doctrine, modern or antique, as to the nature and extent of the authority of sacred writings. They reside in the quenchless human hunger to know something about the nature of God and to experience something of His power and His presence. The abiding questions of life still remain the speculative ones; it is only the material and method of high inquiry which the new order has changed. There is still no surer way to claim the hearts and minds of men than to offer them something which their reason and their conscience will permit them to believe! Just because the old world is breaking up, and much that elder men have set their hearts upon is failing them, and many new and glittering things that younger men are grasping are not bringing them—have no power in themselves to bring—inward freedom and peace, so much the more, in a changing world, men are constrained to turn away from the lust of having to the desire of being,—to search for the living God.

But because of the high seriousness of that quest, its difficulty, and the urgency of the need that in-

spires it, they are exacting of those who minister to it. If we talk of Him in the modern world, we must do it with candid minds and honest hearts; here of all places we dare not put forward phrases in the place of insights, the formulas of another world, and assert that they will interpret and strengthen the experience of this one. The more sensitive and reflective men in the Protestant pulpits know that we dare not do this thing. Take the bulk of the preaching in our larger city churches — does it instinctively avoid religious themes? Does it deal more with the ethical than the speculative aspects of religion, the expression rather than the meaning of the spiritual life? To what extent are the sermons informal talks on conduct, somewhat idealized discussions of public questions, exhortations to social service? Is the preaching more on the method and effect rather than the nature and the source of religious experience?

The better part of so-called liberal preaching is of this sort. It meets the distinctively religious problem by evading it. And the reason is not far to seek. Here, too, the Protestant Church still largely phrases her very doctrine of God in the terms of the old order of ideas. We return to an absolute philosophy, to a monarchical vocabulary, to an aristocratic system of thought and society when we think or speak of Him! If we turn back to the various Protestant Confessions, excepting perhaps that of Augsburg, we can read the story. God is

a transcendent Being still, dwelling apart from His world, different in kind from His creatures, as unlike us, indeed, as possible. We are caught in the snare of time, He is eternal and changeless. We are the erring children of ignorance and sin, He the holy and omniscient One. We are the prisoners of sense and space, He the omnipresent Ruler; We are the frail and helpless victims of earthquake shock and lightning fire, He the omnipotent Sovereign of us all. We are creatures who draw in pain with our mother's milk, who know the agony of remorse and are compounded of the very substance of sorrow, but God dwells in everlasting light and bliss, an utterly glorious, sinless Being.

Here is, for the modern sense, no Deity, only a passable definition of it! Every phrase removes us by experience, understanding and need from Him we are supposed to worship. And if the language is reformed, to meet the New Testament vocabulary, and, for these terms of an absolute philosophy is substituted the family name of Father, it is still a Father thought of as an isolated and superlative Individual, standing over against us, beyond the chasm that separates this world from the world to come. The phraseology, the prayer vocabulary, the whole temper and attitude of average institutional religion take this contra-human conception of Deity. It is not Jesus' conception and it is not real nor rewarding to this age. Sir Francis Younghusband confesses both the skepticism and the faith of the

new era when he says: "The existence of an outside Providence who created us, who watches over us, and who guides our lives, like a Merciful Father, we have found it impossible longer to believe in. But of the existence of a Holy Spirit, radiating upward through all animate beings, and finding its fullest expression in man, we can be as certain as of anything in this world."

There is here a new searching after God if haply we may find Him. Some of the semi-mystical, semi-sentimental cults, which we so readily despise, are preaching it. Because it is intelligible to the present way of thinking about the world, its doctrine of immanence meeting the present form of the eternal need, it falls on eager ears. It tells of the living God within the world we see surging around us; a part of its half-ignoble, half-radiant aspiration, informing its costly struggles. It has given men and women a new and joyous sense of coöperation with a deity who is not remote judge and absolute sovereign but comrade in the struggle of the race.

But we come to the essence of the Christian message when we approach the person of Jesus, in whom the long spiritual evolution of his nation was so culminated that what he was became the shining and sufficient witness to all he said. The God of his fathers, whom he felt anew, he so lived that in him person and message were inextricably mingled. The world has never turned away from him and is never likely to; each new crusade in the long strife

for human betterment looks in sublime confidence to his gospel as its forerunner and defense. The light and peace of utter moral victory shone in his face; across the long centuries it is still a beacon to the souls of men. The victorious magnanimity of his Cross remains the chief pledge of the ultimate victory of our humanity over even ignorance and cruelty and sin and death. The Lord Jesus, gentle beyond all expression, utterly forgiving because all comprehending, is the sanctuary of a broken humanity; the Lord Jesus, faithful to the end, pure and victorious in the arms of death, is the chief witness to that divine quality of spirit which dwells forever within man. To what revealing and reconciling planes of common faith, solicitude and service might not the spirit of Jesus lift the embittered men and women of our distracted world to-day — they who so desperately seek their own life and thereby so inexorably lose it!

Why is it then that half the Church has almost ceased to preach about him and that much of the speaking of the other half offends the minds which listen to it? It seems to me that there are few things more tragic at the present moment, which so needs Jesus, which would so gladly follow him and be his real disciple, than the semi-ecclesiastical, semi-metaphysical barriers which the Church has erected between him and the men and women of this day. She appears to be more concerned with perpetuating accredited definitions of his person than with stimu-

lating moral allegiance to his life. If that be true, it is a dreadful and a damning indictment.

For Jesus is still thought of and still preached by the Church in the terms of the dual life. How instructive here is the review of the controversy which split to its foundations the New England of a century ago and culminated in the Unitarian schism. Both contestants in that struggle accepted the notion of the divided world; of the human and divine as differing in kind; God and man as different sorts of beings. The Trinitarian party following Anselm and the imperial Athanasian tradition held fast to Jesus as the God-man. First postulating that the Divine and human were by their very nature mutually exclusive, it nevertheless asserted that both were found together in his person. The historical result was that the humanity was neglected and diminished until the Lord Jesus of the synoptists became a preëxistent, uncreated and eternal Being, the ecclesiastical Christ, a remote theological figure, sublime Victim in a world drama of salvation. The Unitarian party, clinging to his humanity, and equally unable to conceive of it as compatible with Deity solved the problem by denying his divinity.

The dispute was bitter, for both contestants were sincere, and its results tragic and far-reaching. But it is yet more tragic to realize that while to-day the whole contest is obsolete men still perpetuate the impossible formulations of the Christ of the two



natures which the notion of the dual world once made inevitable. For the very basis of the controversy has been removed. God, under the impulse of the scientific movement is recognized as in and of His world, the very substance of its on-goings and development. There is then an obliteration of the line once so sharply drawn between the natural and the supernatural; the human and the divine are no longer exclusive states. Hence Jesus, ethical and spiritual flower of our humanity, is, *ipso facto*, chief witness to, expression of, the character of Divine Being; hence, since that Being works in and through us all, we differ from the Lord Jesus in immeasurable degree but not in kind. Yet the Church is still unable or unwilling to relinquish her scholastic Christologies or all the elaborate doctrines of a unique and miraculous incarnation, and a supernatural atonement which flow from them. And then she wonders that scholars, to whom integrity of the mind is as precious as integrity of conduct, and youth with their pitiless instinct for obscurities and evasions, avoid and distrust her!

Here is the most serious accusation which the new age can bring against the allegiance to the old order on the part of the churches. Because the life and teaching, the person and the sacrifice of Jesus, are the very hope of the world, the chiefest, we may believe, of its moral and spiritual resources, and the world is being kept from him. How different was the notion of God and the conception of his

own office which he himself promulgated. How he strove to present the vision of the heavenly Father in terms of moral character and human experience, not absolute philosophy and metaphysical definition. If you want to know what God is like, look at me! he said: "he that hath seen me has seen the Father." What did he mean by that? Not that he, Jesus, was like God, but that God was like him. Almost the whole body of institutional religion has followed the extra-biblical, anti-New Testament course. It has conceived of God in the terms of various absolute and dualistic philosophies, and having first constructed him out of these materials, tried to read its creation back into Jesus.

But Jesus said: Read me into God. So far as man can know and understand him, what I am he is like. In short, it was in the terms of human experience, moral and spiritual, experience, not of a priori reasoning, that he declared men could best approach Him. How modern and intelligible that sounds. The characteristics of Jesus are not imperial power, absolute understanding, for all his intellectual subtlety and courageous and acute dialectic. He is greatest in his moral splendor, his ethical sublimity and if we speak of him, and of his God and Father, in these terms, we are on comprehensible grounds.

Here we appeal to the moral sense of mankind. It is particularly the insight and courage of that moral sense which the present world most needs.

There are few living men who will not acknowledge the leadership of Jesus, revere his name, become his disciples when he is thus presented. Honor, loyalty, purity, unselfishness, magnanimous and utter faith in the human spirit, that public-mindedness which takes all the world unto itself and which we call "love"—it is of these things that he is the incarnation and the pledge for our humanity. Is it not precisely leadership in these things that the men who to-day are torn apart, and must learn how once more to live together, most want and need?

There can be, one believes, no doubt that it is on this ethical idealism of Jesus that whatever Church there is to be in the future is going to be built. Oh, but you say, this is leaving out the very essence of religion. This is only a moral abstraction in the place of a metaphysical one. Men cannot live by that; it is a sort of stoicism, a mere "ethical culture." But, no; this moral idealism becomes religious, takes on passion and warmth and enters the mystical and ultimate world as, through Jesus, we personalize it, learn from him that it is of the very spirit of a living God. So that we head it up, so to speak, in that ultimate Life. The will to achieve, the power to conquer is born of that new conviction that God Himself gives the sanction of His own experience to the serving and suffering, the courageous and loyal life. It is a sufficient incentive to know that insofar as

we express ourselves in it, we lose ourselves in Him.

In terms not too much unlike these religion is asserting itself to-day in the new order of the world as, in other terms, it functioned in days gone by. It claims in joyous affection, as brothers of the faith, all those who believe in the spirit of man, out of which, in awe and tears, has arisen all the noblest that we know; all those who see, in the free and honest mind the clean and loyal heart, the will set on useful and on holy things, the one eternal Way towards the ever flying goals of freedom and truth. It is well assured that, whatever the source of the refreshing and sustaining Power, it will always come, not from without in inexplicable and terrifying form, but welling up from within, an overflowing and everlasting spring, whenever two or three are met together in this faith in the God of goodness, this desire for holiness, this joy in love.

## IX

So we come to our final inquiry. Can the Church survive in the changing order? It is a real question. We have a way, partly inherited from the Catholic notion of the Church, partly the product of an age-long familiarity with her, of supposing that she cannot perish, that she is a permanent part of the structure of society.

But there is no such thing as permanency of this sort in the social structure. Ancient institutions which send their roots deep into the soil of forgotten centuries, which are intrenched behind sentiment, tradition, all sorts of material interests, do pass away. The Church's age, her prestige, her wealth, her organization, all her vested rights in the old order, these cannot of themselves, save her. Indeed, in our own day, we have seen two institutions, older than she, and if possible more firmly intrenched in human society, actually vanish. One was the institution of human slavery. It would be hard to-day to find men to defend it; it would be impossible to renew it. But how absurd it was, until a few years ago, to argue against the doctrine that man may hold property in man. The greatest civilizations of antiquity included slavery in their systems as a matter of course. It found a place in

Plato's Republic and underlay, like a dark foundation stone, the splendid flowering of the Greek intellect. In our own country it was upheld by all sorts of interests, political, social, economic, even religious. The Church denounced the abolitionists as infidels; their conduct as fanatical and wicked. Slavery was justified from the New Testament, colleges and theological seminaries defended it, and one President held it to be "an institution of God and according to natural law." To suppose that this nation could get along without slavery was utterly contrary to the Bible, the Constitution, and to human nature itself!

But the institution perished. To be sure the instinct which produced it survived under other forms. Man's lust to exploit his fellow creatures did not die out. Men still toil for others against their will. Many millions labor without expectancy and endure without hope and exist, rather than live, from hand to mouth. But one ancient and immensely powerful institution, born of this instinct, has perished from the earth.

And now Prohibition is upon us. The institution of convivial drinking antedates by hundreds of centuries the Christian Church. All the arts of expression,—literature, painting, sculpture and music,—have found it a chief source of material and a major inspiration. Social intercourse for thousands of people is hardly conceivable apart from it. Immense financial and economic interests have

been bound up with it. Yet the time came when this institution began increasingly to offend the better social, moral and economic sense of the day and, from that moment, it began to wane, and to-day we are actually witnessing its rapid destruction.

One might multiply instances. Not so long ago, as history counts time, the Roman gladiatorial show was defended as an indispensable form of religious sacrifice. Who in the 18th century ever thought of interfering with the duel? It was inconceivable that a virile and clear-headed human being could have his veracity or his honor assailed without fighting. No man had done so since the world began. Duelling and civilization were inseparable.

Yet all these passed away and it is neither unreasonable nor improbable that the Church may pass too. A human world without corporate expression of religious experience is an impossible supposition. But that gives us no reason to believe that the present corporate expression is obliged to continue. A chief reason why it has maintained itself so long has been its plasticity, power to assimilate new standards of conduct and new modes of thought. Its practice has been happily inconsistent with its absolute theory and to the adaptability, no less than the comprehensiveness of its teaching, it owes its present existence. When it ceases to change of a certainty it will soon die.

The question is not only real; it has grave importance. At few other times in man's mental

and moral history has he more needed the guiding and steadying leadership of a strong religious organization than now. The defect of the virtue of the new freedom, born in the Reformation and the Renaissance, was its destruction of what had been the common moral authority of civilization in its denial of the supernatural Church, a destruction the full effects of whose mingled peril and opportunity we are only now discovering. The great failure of the new age was, and is, that it has not yet found, or at any rate whole-heartedly accepted, any adequate substitute for an imperial moral and religious order. Those who hate and fear the present trend of civilization taunt us with having avoided the Scylla of tyranny only to fall into the Charybdis of anarchy.

And, indeed, there are few worse dangers than permitting the individual to imagine that he is a law unto himself and may erect his person into a sovereign over the whole universe. Our world is full of dilettanti who, in art and learning and conduct, have felt or studied the scientific and naturalistic movements just far enough and superficially enough to grasp the idea of relativity without perceiving the implications for conduct and belief which an acceptance of it, as complete and sufficient in itself, entails. Lesser men and women, seeing the mass of endlessly opposing complexities of the modern world, gladly seize that as an excuse for abandoning what is indeed the ever-failing, but also the



ever-necessary struggle to achieve unity, order and perfection. They deny the existence of all æsthetic or moral standards; practically annihilate the distinction between good and evil; and abandon themselves to a sort of emotional chaos and moral sentimentalism. Such extreme individualism is common and lamentable enough. It tends to accept all powerful impulses as good and beautiful, none ugly and evil. And, not altogether unlike the old dogmatism, it thinks it has answered the eternal questions of right and wrong, ugly and beautiful, holy and profane, either by refusing to admit their existence or by asserting that, as insoluble, they are also negligible, problems.

It is then of immense importance that institutions which have recorded and embodied many generations of wise and sad experiment, and much understanding of human life, should remain respected and influential forces in the community. Although they can no longer lay claim to arbitrary and absolute insight and authority, yet they have another source of power both genuine and essential in an age of restlessness and revolt. For of them, no less than of individuals, it may be true:

“That old experience doth attain  
To something of prophetic strain.”

It is then with a serious solicitude that we ask our question, *Can the Church survive in the changing order?* Well, the answer will depend upon the

extent and character of her faith. The day has come for dropping a liberal apologetic for scholastic Christianity; for trying to redefine ancient phrases which once carried an open and ingenuous meaning; for reinterpreting historical movements so as to make them unhistorically acceptable; for reading twentieth century sophistries into good third century metaphysics. We have been doing that with varying degrees of failure for three decades now. Such reconciliations of old systems with new ideas and values, however subtle or ingenious, are never successful. To the conservative they appear abhorrent and to the radical, disingenuous; they go too far for the one and not far enough for the other. But their chief failure is that they reverse the natural order of things. It is not natural to consciously preserve old forms and painfully read new life back into them. It is natural to have new life which irresistibly shall make its own new forms, like wings, to fit it. All such reconciliations then, are by the conditions of their nature, forced, not spontaneous; calculated, not inspired; labored not free; ingenious not convincing.

But to meet the new world with confidence, with constructive criticism, with sympathy and good will, to work out, together with it, a fresh philosophy of life and a transformed code of conduct, guided by the teaching and example of Jesus and the other gentlest and holiest spirits the world has yet known, calls for an immense exercise of faith. It will only

be done if the Church really believes in her Master, his message and herself. To one who is a child of the new age, it would appear to be of the essence of religious confidence, the very evidence of spiritual fidelity and a hall-mark of faith, thus to deal freely and candidly with the religious doubts and problems, the critical distrust of old formulas and organizations, the tentative attempts at a new moral and religious standard which distinguish this, as every other vital and expanding age. It implies confidence in the inherent reasonableness and intrinsic worth of what you believe when you are willing to throw it into the arena of critical examination and exacting discussion. It implies both the wisdom and the courage of those who have had personal experience of that which they profess, when they are willing that it, like everything else in the world, should face the facts and all the facts, the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Those to whom religion is a life, not a convention; an experience, not a theory; a genuine and rewarding way of living, not a profession and a special privilege, will naturally welcome all that the honest criticism the serious thinking, the new insight of the present age may offer.

What makes one doubt as to the future of the Church is that the majority of her members are not possessed of any such faith as this. There is a cautious and prudential type of human being, natural material for Churchman and Conformer who,

professing liberal instincts and ideas, will nevertheless deal only with assertive and affirming matter, with the doctrines to praise, the antiquities to hold. He would like silence to take the place of the condemnation of old and bitter ways, of the hot warning against intrenched prejudices, of the frank repudiation of superseded beliefs. This man has a positive genius for reading new and unrelated meanings into old rites and statements. By the ancient device of the allegory, by using as a symbol what was meant to be taken literally, he can draw the newest of wine out of the oldest bottles, patch the faded garment till it becomes a crazy-quilt, without coherence or dignity or meaning. There is a quite popular type of expository preaching which thus uses Old Testament narratives and history. Ignoring what they meant to their authors, or what they conveyed to their original hearers, it reads the last ethical, economic, political doctrine back into them. With quite extraordinary naïveté preachers sometimes confess the totally different, mutually exclusive sermonic ideas and developments, which they draw from one and the same text! This obviously is not revering an ancient literature, nor believing in it. It is a smug exploiting of it.

But the type of mind which produces these eminently safe and comfortable liberals, which is always guarding holiness and goodness from cool and critical investigation, from trial and shock, is generally looked upon as being of the essence of progres-

sive fidelity. It would appear, however, to be just the opposite. It is essentially a skeptical mind, it reveals a fearful and a doubting heart. To refuse to submit religious institutions and convictions to that pitiless scrutiny and exacting estimate which everything else in the modern world is undergoing, appears to arise from fears as to the results of such a trial, a lurking doubt as to whether the Church could meet the tests that all other institutions are facing. Such an attitude, far from revealing loyalty and faith, indicates the timidity and distrust which can maintain its convictions only by throwing about them an artificial protection. It is the unconscious skeptics who claim the special privileges of pious acquiescence for their beliefs; they must keep them unchallenged, wrapped in layers of devout obscurantism and vague sentiment, lest if the outward sign of the spiritual life be altered, the inward grace itself should perish from the earth.

Institutional religion is shot through and through with this subtle and corrosive skepticism which masquerades under the name of faith and orthodoxy. If the Church perishes it will be this type of "faith," the sort of sinner who holds it, that will be chiefly responsible.

For a true faith would reverse the process. If the Church possesses that kind then, by its daring and discoveries, she will live. If she is controlled by the other kind, she will die. Religion is not going to perish from the earth; men were never

more conscious of its worth and power than now. But, being vital, it is potent and being potent, it will be plastic and free. Therefore, if the Church accepts a genuinely scientific research everywhere else but discourages its spirit and method in the realm of man's most permanent interests, religion will indeed suffer somewhat for a time but the institution will suffer most. For all those who really understand the beauty and the power of the spiritual life, will value it too highly, and believe in it too profoundly, ever for a moment to accept any attempted ecclesiastical monopoly of it.

What the Church needs then for her salvation is a new accession of faith. If she will say, in the spirit of her founder: We believe that this is a friendly and intelligible universe where free inquiry is a part of its order and questions bring results; we do not fear that man's ethical and spiritual life will dwindle even though its outer forms and garments are utterly changed; we believe that holiness and goodness are eternal elements in the world, and by their very nature, unconquerable and not dependent upon Greek Christologies, old codes, and medieval philosophies — that faith will save her. For the religious life can always stand upon its own feet. Its foes are not those who candidly examine and critically appraise it, but rather those enemies who, in the guise of friends, oppose any change in its theory and expression.

To cherish and deepen this faith, then, within and

without the present Church, is both the opportunity and the obligation of all who have been touched with the divine fire, filled with the purifying joy of human love. And in this, as in every other high effort of human life, they will pray for,

“New hearts with the inquirer’s holy robe  
And purged, considerate minds.”

THE END













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